

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9461

INFO DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE ECJ2

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 0903

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, LE, SY

SUBJECT: TEPID GOE REACTION TO TRIPARTITE CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON

REF: CAIRO 872 NOTAL

1. SUMMARY: GOE HAS NOT YET COMMENTED OFFICIALLY ON
TRIPARTITE CEASEFIRE ARRANGEMENTS IN LEBANON. AUTHORITATIVE
COMMENTARY IN AHRAH, HOWEVER, MAKES EXPLICIT ACCUSATION THAT
SYRIANS, PRODDED BY SOVIETS, SEEK "CONTROL" BOTH LEBANESE
SITUATION AND PLO, AND THIS IS REASON BEHIND SARG REFUSAL
OF ANY PAN-ARAB OR EGYPTIAN EFFORTS HELP SOLVE LEBANESE
PROBLEM. SYRIA REPRESENTS USSR IN LEBANON "JUST AS CUBA
DOES IN ANGOLA". AHRAH COMMENTARY WILL ANGER DAMASCUS
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AND MORE VICIOUS WRANGLING SEEMS LIKELY. EMBASSY CAIRO

BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT EGYPTIAN JEALOUSY AND SUSPICION OF DAMASCUS WILL NOT CHANGE EGYPT'S BELIEF THAT SETTLEMENT IN LEBANON IS ABSOLUTELY VITAL IF SYRIAN/ISRAELI MILITARY INTERVENTION AND NEW SHOOTING WAR IN ME ARE TO BE AVERTED. SEEN IN THIS LIGHT, GOE FAILURE PUBLICLY TO SUPPORT TRIPARTITE ACCORD APPEAR SHORTSIGHTED. END SUMMARY.

2. GOE HAS NOT YET REACTED OFFICIALLY TO SYRIAN ARRANGED CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON. PRIVATELY, GOE HAS BEEN LESS THAN ECSTATIC. SINCE EGYPTIANS PROVED MANIFESTLY UNABLE ACHIEVE TRUCE, ELEMENT OF SOUR GRAPES IS CERTAINLY INVOLVED. THERE IS, HOWEVER, MORE IMPORTANT REASON FOR GOE TEPIDNESS; THAT IS, A SUSPICION THAT RAPIDITY OF KHADDAM'S SUCCESS PROVIDES PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE NOT ONLY THAT SYRIA COULD HAVE ACTED POSITIVELY AT EARLIER DATE BUT WAS INSTEAD ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN KEEPING THE POT AT A BOIL. (REFTEL).

3. THIS VIEW IS REFLECTED IN STRIKING MANNER BY CAIRO MEDIA REPORTING OF TRIPARTITE ARRANGEMENTS. ACHIEVEMENT OF FORMULA IS LEAD STORY AND IS REPORTED DIRECTLY FROM WIRE SERVICE SOURCES. EDITORIALS, HOWEVER, MERELY STRESS IMPORTANCE OF SETTLING THE SITUATION FORTHWITH, OMITTING DIRECT REFERENCE TO YESTERDAY'S DECLARATION. TWO COMMENTARIES CARRY SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE. AKHBAR HINTS, WITHOUT NAMING NAMES, THAT SYRIANS AND SOVIETS HAVE BEEN TREACHEROUSLY STIRRING POT. AHRAH COMMENTARY BY CHAIRMAN IHSAN ABD AL-QADDUS IS NOT ONLY MORE EXPLICIT BUT CONSTITUTES DIRECT ATTACK ON SARG.

4. ABD AL-QADDUS ARTICLE, HIS REGULAR FRONT-PAGE FRIDAY FEATURE, IS CLEARLY BASED ON HIGH LEVEL GOE BRIEFING, PROBABLY EITHER SADAT OR FAHMY. HE ARGUES AS FOLLOWS: SOME SAY SAVAGE FIGHTING GREW OUT OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN CONFLICT, BUT REAL CONFLICT IS BETWEEN THOSE WHO SUPPORT AND THOSE WHO OPPOSE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE. SHAM'UN, GEMAYYEL, AND OTHERS HAVE DECLARED THEY ARE FIGHTING AGAINST PALESTINIAN PRESENCE. SINCE MANY PALESTINIANS ARE CHRISTIANS AND SINCE MANY LEBANESE MUSLIMS OPPOSE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE, MOTIVES OF CIVIL WAR CANNOT BE-MODIFICATION OF CONFESSIONAL BALANCE EMBODIED
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IN PRESENT CONSTITUTION. FURTHER, PALESTINIANS HAVE NEVER SOUGHT SUCH CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES.

5. IT WAS NOT ACTUAL PALESTINIAN PRESENCE WHICH CREATED PROBLEM, ABD AL-QADDUS CONTINUES, BUT FACT THAT PALESTINIANS MADE THEMSELVES INTO STRIKING FORCE AGAINST ISRAEL. LEBANESE SECTS HAVE ALWAYS DEPENDED ON FOREIGN PROTECTION; MARONITES PROTECTED BY FRANCE AND LATER US, AND MUSLIMS BY EGYPT AND

THEN, AFTER 1967, BY PALESTINIANS. WHEN PALESTINIANS ENLARGED INTERNAL PROTECTIVE ROLE TO BECOME AGGRESSIVE FACTOR IN STRUGGLE AGAINST ISRAEL, CRY FOR PARTITION AROSE.

6. BECOMING ABSOLUTELY EXPLICIT, ABD AL-QADDUS POINTS OUT THAT BOTH USSR AND USG NOW RPT NOW REJECT DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN LEBANESE FIGHTING. SOVIETS HAD TO ABANDON EFFORTS USE PLO AS TOOL BECAUSE OF ARAFAT'S DETERMINATION PRESERVE MOVEMENT'S INDEPENDENCE. SOVIETS CONSEQUENTLY COUNT ON SYRIA TO INFLUENCE PLO. SYRIA IS ENDEAVORING, BY USE OF PALESTINIAN FORCES LOYAL TO IT, E.G., SA'IQA AND YARMUK TROOPS, TO "CONTROL" BOTH LEBANESE SITUATION AND PLO.

7. ABD AL-QADDUS ALLEGES THIS SOVIET-SYRIAN DETERMINATION CONTROL LEBANON AND PLO COULD BE REASON WHY SARG INSISTS ON ITS EXCLUSIVE STATUS IN LEBANON, AND WHY DAMASCUS "REFUSES ALL ARAB ENDEAVOR AT INTERVENTION," BY ARAB LEAGUE, ARAB SUMMIT, OR EGYPT. SYRIA CONSIDERS LEBANON IS INTERNATIONAL, NOT ARAB, PROBLEM IN WHICH SYRIA "REPRESENTS USSR JUST AS CUBA DOES IN ANGOLA."

8. ADDUCING AN EXAMPLE WHICH WE HAVE NOT HEARD BEFORE, ABD AL-QADDUS CLAIMS THIS SYRIAN MOTIVATION MAY EXPLAIN "STRANGE OFFER" CARRIED TO CAIRO FROM DAMASCUS BY "AN ARAB PERSONALITY" (PLO ENVOY?) WHO SUGGESTED GOE-SARG CONCILIATION MIGHT BE POSSIBLE IF SADAT WOULD ANNOUNCE HE HAS HANDED OVER TO ASAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAVING LEBANON.

9. COMMENT: THESE GOE-INSPIRED REMARKS WILL OBVIOUSLY INFURIATE DAMASCUS AND ANOTHER ROUND OF VICIOUS MUTUAL RECRIMINATION IS MORE THAN LIKELY. (AHRAM COMMENTARY AND SYRIAN EDITORIAL OF JANUARY 22 LINKING LEBANESE EVENTS TO EGYPTIAN DISENGAGEMENT DIPLOMACY (DAMASCUS 366) PUTS DISPUTE BACK IN CONFIDENTIAL

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FAMILIAR MOLD.)

10. ABD AL-QADDUS' ARTICLE REPRESENTS A STRAIGHTFORWARD SEMI-OFFICIAL ATTACK ON SYRIA'S MOTIVES AND INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON. IT IS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, TO NOTE THAT ONLY OFFICIAL GOE STATEMENT WHICH HAS BEEN MADE SINCE ANNOUNCEMENT OF CEASEFIRE WAS PRESIDENT SADAT'S REMARKS TO JOURNALISTS YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH KARAMANLIS. SADAT BROKE NO NEW GROUND WHATSOEVER. HE REITERATED PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED VIEW THAT LEBANESE SITUATION IS DEPLORABLE, THAT LEBANESE MUST REFORM THEIR OWN REGIME AND THEN ACHIEVE NEW SETTLEMENT WITH PALESTINIANS; EGYPT OPPOSES PARTITION. (SADAT MAY NOT YET HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF BAABDA ANNOUNCEMENT.) FONMIN'S OFFICE TELLS US THERE ARE NO PRESENT PLANS FOR MFA STATEMENT ON TRIPARTITE ARRANGEMENT.

11. GOE'S LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR TRIPARTITE CEASEFIRE AND FOR APPARENT SYRIAN SUCCESS REFLECTS EGYPTIAN FRUSTRATION AND SUSPICION OF DAMASCUS, BUT SHOULD NOT RPT NOT BE READ AS LACK OF CONCERN OR MISUNDERSTANDING OF DANGERS INHERENT IN LEBANESE CONFLICT. ALTHOUGH LOATH TO REJECT ANY PLOY WHICH WOULD SHOW UP WHAT IT BELIEVES TO BE SELFISH SYRIAN OBSTRUCTION OF ROAD TO PEACE, GOE WILL NOT, IN OUR VIEW, KNOWINGLY PUT AT RISK ANY GENUINE EFFORT ACHIEVE LEBANESE SETTLEMENT. FOR TIME BEING, HOWEVER, GOE CHAGRIN OVER POSSIBLE SYRIAN SUCCESS IN AREA WHERE EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE WAS TRADITIONALLY PREDOMINANT HAS APPARENTLY CLOUDED SADAT-FAHMY JUDGEMENT. THEIR FAILURE SUPPORT TRIPARTITE ACCORD MAY LESSEN ITS CHANCE OF SUCCESS AND THUS RUN COUNTER TO EGYPT'S OWN INTERESTS.

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